can suffice. The Uighurs, numbering 13 million, are few, but they are also desperate. They may fight. War may come. On that day, as diplomats across the globe call for dialogue with Beijing, may every nation look to its origins and its conscience. For my part, if my Jewish-sounding name tells me anything, it is this: The dead may never be fully avenged, but no people can accept being fatally exploited forever.

□ 1510

YUCCA MOUNTAIN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, it's great to get a chance to come back down to the floor to visit with my colleagues and talk about an issue that I've been raising seven or eight weeks in a row. I'll have a little more extended time to go over what has transpired over the past 6 to 7 months, and that's that this country really needs to address this high-level nuclear waste problem in this country.

I'm glad to be joined with some of my colleagues who I'll yield to in a couple of minutes.

But just to start in a synopsis, based upon the parts of the country that we visited, for us to move past the logjam that's in the other body, we have to find 60 Senators who will vote to move forward what we know is Federal law. The Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 recognized and determined that Yucca Mountain would be the national repository for high-level nuclear waste.

I think a lot of folks would say, well, so if it's a law, why aren't we there? Well, the reason we're not there now is because the majority leader of the Senate has blocked it, along with the President of the United States.

This time is being spent to help educate the American public, Mr. Speaker, on where is the high level nuclear waste, what communities, what States are affected, and what Senators should be held somewhat accountable for the positions they take as far as high-level nuclear waste?

On the chart to my far left, throughout this last half a year, we need 60 votes. We've got at least 27 Senators who we know already support this based upon votes or public statements. We have eight that really have not had a chance to address this by a vote or haven't made a public statement on it yet. And we have seven ''nays'' or seven ''no'' votes.

With that, just because I appreciate my colleagues taking time out, I would like to first yield to my colleague from the State of Illinois, no disrespect to my colleague from the State of Georgia, to go into a discussion about one of the areas that we addressed, one of the first sites we talked about. I figured I'd better come forward and talk about my own State. If I'm going to talk about other States, I better talk about my own State, the State of Illinois.

In the State of Illinois, 50 percent of our electricity is generated by nuclear power. We're one of the biggest nuclear power States in the country. We picked a facility that's actually closed, which is Zion Power Plant.

With that, I'd yield to my colleague, Mr. DOLD, to kind of talk about Zion, the State of Illinois, and its location.

Mr. DOLD. I want to thank the gentleman for yielding and certainly for taking this issue up, which I think is so very, very critical not only for just the State of Illinois but for facilities all across the country as we look at how we can best store the used material from the nuclear facilities—the spent fuel rods, more specifically.

If you'll notice here in Zion, which is just north of the district but certainly affects the district just north of Chicago and the 10th district which I represent, it's right on the shores of Lake Michigan. The Great Lakes, 95 percent of all fresh surface water in the United States is from the Great Lakes.

When we look at the amount of drinking water that the State of Illinois uses, it's an enormous percentage. It's coming from the Great Lakes. Yet, in our infinite wisdom we've decided that we want to store the fuel rods just a sheer several hundred feet from the shores of Lake Michigan, 5 feet above the water table.

If we take a look at Yucca Mountain, the reason why Yucca Mountain was chosen was Yucca Mountain is uniquely suited as the premier place. If we were to store any place spent fuel rods, this would be the ideal location. A thousand feet below the ground. A thousand feet above the water table. A very dry, arid environment. And correct me if I'm wrong: Where are the nearest inhabitants of Yucca Mountain? Is it 100 miles?

Mr. SHIMKUS. The city of Las Vegas, which is the major metropolitan area, is a hundred miles from Yucca Mountain.

What people have a hard time understanding about the nuclear test area, this is where the nuclear test site was. The Federal Government owns numerous parcels of land around Yucca Mountain. The communities right outside the reservation—and I think the whole test site area is like the size of New Hampshire—but the communities, what's interesting about this debate, the communities right outside the gate are fully supportive of Yucca Mountain being the repository for high-level nuclear waste. And why do I know that? Because I visited them. I've been in their communities. I went to the community center. They welcomed me, and we talked about how this was important for the country and their local communities.

Mr. DOLD. This is absolutely critical for the country. When we look at just the State of Illinois, the State of Illinois has got 13 commercial reactors at seven sites across the State of Illinois. Our neighbors to the north have three commercial reactors operating on two different sites, both of those on Lake Michigan.

So when we look at the 8.5 million people that rely on the drinking water, much less the recreation, the fishing, all of the different forms of commerce that happen on our Great Lakes, this is something that I think is critical.

The Senators from both the State of Illinois and the State of Wisconsin have all been in favor of trying to utilize this facility out at Yucca Mountain, and it just makes sense.

Why would we want to store, Mr. Speaker, over a thousand metric tons of nuclear waste hundreds of feet away from the greatest source of fresh surface water in our Nation? It is indeed the jewel of our ecosystem. This is something that we need to protect, something that we need to have a long-term vision for.

Yet what we don't need to do is have scattered sites all across our country of nuclear waste that has a greater potential for disasters to happen. They're being stored right now in casks that are about 5 feet above the ground water, above the water table, and what we'd like to do is take it a thousand feet above the water table, a thousand feet below ground.

This is something that makes absolutely perfect sense, and I welcome the gentleman's colloquy in terms of talking about not only this site, and I thank you for bringing it up week after week, trying to make sure that we try and get through to our colleagues on the other side of the building to make sure they can move this commonsense piece of legislation forward.

How much have we spent already at Yucca Mountain? I think it's in the $14 billion range.

Mr. SHIMKUS. My colleague is correct. We've already spent about $14.5 billion dollars in the research, the development, the exploration, the testing. A lot of money, time, effort, and some of our greatest minds have been involved.

I don't really think you have to be one of the greatest minds. The point I always say is, common sense says in the desert underneath a mountain. Isn't that where you would want high-level nuclear waste versus right off the shore of Lake Michigan?

Mr. DOLD. It seems certainly like common sense to me, and I certainly applaud the gentleman's efforts and thank you for giving me the time. I just want to make sure that this isn't just important for the folks in the State in Illinois and the folks in Wisconsin, and the people in Michigan that are surrounding the Great Lakes, and specifically Lake Michigan; it's all the Great Lakes. And it's not just in Illinois. There are nuclear power facilities all across the country.

We need to have a safe, secure way to be able to store these spent fuel rods, and I think Yucca Mountain has been

proven to be the place to do it. And I think we should move forward on it.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Can you tell me the disposition of what's going on with the Zion Power Plant? What's going on there right now?

Mr. DOLD. The Zion Power Plant has actually been decommissioned at this point in time. So right now they are putting it in mothballs, they are taking the spent fuel rods, they're in casks, they are being transported to a location that's on the site. It's just literally a few hundred feet away from the beaches there, and probably about 20 to 30 miles north of the city of Chicago.

This is not the place that we want to be storing spent fuel rods.

Zion was a great source of electricity for the people around the area and has been decommissioned over the last 2 years. So it is now sitting idle, and they're trying to go through the process of dismantling it.

□ 1520

Mr. SHIMKUS. Yes. I think I briefly tried to show this article from The Salt Lake Tribune, dated December 8, which talks about some of the reactor parts that are going to go out to Utah.

What the article ends up saying is:

The site will not, however, take the Illinois plant's used fuel rods. The United States currently has no site to dispose of spent fuel from commercial reactors, a form of high-level nuclear waste.

So if we don't have a location, where is that high-level nuclear waste, the spent fuel, going to remain?

MR. DOLD. It's going to remain, seriously, right in the middle of a high-population area and hundreds of feet away from the jewel of our ecosystem—in the Great Lakes, in Lake Michigan. It's the wrong place for it to be. Common sense would say to move it out to a place, to a location, just like Yucca Mountain; $14 billion of research and dollars have gone into the site. Let's put it 1,000 feet below the ground, 1,000 feet above the water table, in an arid environment. It's absolutely perfect for it. It's something that we should move forward on. It's in the best interest and safety of the American public to do something along these lines.

Mr. SHIMKUS. I'm told that Zion is, what, 40 miles from downtown Chicago.

Mr. DOLD. It's 40 miles from downtown Chicago. So, obviously, in the greater Chicago area, you probably have about 6.5 to 7 million people. It's certainly not what we want to have in terms of this nuclear waste disposal.

Mr. SHIMKUS. The reason this is important is, unfortunately, due to Fukushima Daiichi in Japan, which is a great tragedy. A lot of people think about the containment issue, which has always been the fear. Part of the Fukushima Daiichi problem was the spent fuel in the pools, which might be a bigger environmental disaster based upon things that cannot be planned. That's why we continue to push this.

I appreciate my colleague for coming down.

Mr. DOLD. I thank the gentleman for allowing me to have some time with you today and, again, for talking about this very important issue.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Now I'm going to turn to my colleague from Georgia, who also serves with me on the Energy and Commerce Committee. We have jurisdiction over this. My subcommittee is the Environment and the Economy. I deal with a lot of these waste disposal issues, nuclear waste being one of those.

My colleague from Georgia has followed this issue as long as I have. The last time I came to the floor, I mentioned a couple facilities in Georgia, but the one that I have highlighted is the Savannah River. As I finish, I'll get this picture up to my colleague.

But the point we're trying to make today is that here you have Yucca Mountain, which is a mountain in a desert. Then you have nuclear waste all over this country. Look at this one. It's right next to the Savannah River. At Yucca Mountain, we have no nuclear waste on site. At the Savannah River, there are 6,300 canisters of waste on site. The waste would be stored, as my colleague BOB DOLD said, 1,000 feet underground; whereas, at the Savannah River, it's stored right below the ground. At Yucca Mountain, it's 1,000 feet above the water table. At the Savannah River, it would be zero to 160 feet above the water table. The waste at Yucca Mountain is 100 miles from the Colorado River. Well, you can see that it's adjacent to the Savannah River.

So I appreciate the gentleman from Georgia, Congressman GINGREY, for joining me; and I yield to him to enter into the colloquy.

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I am glad to join my colleague from Illinois, the chairman of the Environment and the Economy Subcommittee on the Committee of Energy and Commerce, on this very important subject.

Our colleagues from Illinois specifically pointed out the existing situation in their State in regard to these nuclear reactor sites in Illinois and what they do with spent nuclear fuel.

The poster that the gentleman has presented in regard to my great State and my neighboring State of South Carolina as to what we're faced with is equally as telling. I think it might be instructive, Mr. Speaker, if I go back and take a walk down memory lane just a little bit in regard to my background.

When I was growing up in North Augusta, South Carolina, this central Savannah River area, which includes the southern part, if you will, or the western part of South Carolina and the eastern part of Georgia, is separated by the Savannah River. There was a facility built on the South Carolina side in a town called Ellington, South Carolina, back in 1950. I hate to tell my age, but I was 7 or 8 at the time. Mr. Speaker, my parents owned a little motel on the river, and they very insightfully named the mom-and-pop, 25-unit motel the Riviera Motel.

During the construction of this nuclear plant, there were 50,000 construction workers involved in constructing that facility for 3 years. Every evening when the Sun went down, I can't tell you how happy my parents were to turn on that ''no vacancy'' sign at the Riviera Motel, because all of these workers stayed with us. We didn't get rich; they were only paying $8 a night. It's just to point out the importance of jobs in the nuclear industry and the capability of expanding our employment sector in this particular lane of energy.

In this country right now, today, I'm told that we produce about 20 percent of our electricity from nuclear power. In the State of Georgia, it's 24 percent. It's not much higher. We have two sites and four reactors. We're in the process of adding two more right on the Savannah River, as the gentleman from Illinois points out, at Plant Vogtle; and, hopefully, we'll get that done.

The problem, which the gentleman is bringing before all of our colleagues—and hopefully to a lot of other folks who are viewing or listening—is: Why is it for the last 30 years we have had no new nuclear sites? We've literally had a moratorium. You have about 103 across the country—those in Illinois, those in Georgia—and what are they doing with this spent nuclear fuel? It is either shallow, underground in pool tanks, not very much above the water table or—even worse—it's aboveground in these concrete and steel containers. Talk about the risk of a terrorist attack in a radiation release.

So the gentleman was so generous to ask me to join him in this colloquy about the issue. I'm looking forward to continuing, as I yield back to him, to discuss the real problem here of what to do with that spent fuel.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Again, I appreciate your joining me today.

I want to quote from a Chicago Tribune editorial of March 19. I'll just read three short paragraphs:

''Here's why that is potentially a bigger problem than a meltdown: In the Japanese reactors, as in many U.S. reactors, the spent fuel is housed in large water-filled pools in the reactor building but outside the concrete-and-steel fortress that surrounds the reactor core.

''If the core melts down, any radiation released is likely to be partly bottled up by the containment vessel.

''Not so for the spent fuel pools, which often contain far more radioactive material than in the reactor. If the water that keeps those rods cool drains or boils away, the used fuel can catch fire. Result: A dangerous plume of extremely high radioactivity spewed into the air.

''Obvious question: Why do nuclear plants store spent fuel that way?

''Obvious answer in the U.S.: Yucca Mountain isn't open. In the 1980s, the

Federal Government launched plans to ship nuclear waste to a storage lair carved into the mountain in Nevada and let it slowly and harmlessly decay.''

So there are benefits to nuclear power. If you're a climate change person and if you don't want carbon dioxide and if you still want a lot of electricity for us to use in all of our new technology, you'll have to have a generator. Yet, in this case, it's the used fuel. It is properly stored, but it would be better stored in a single repository underneath a mountain in the desert for all of those reasons.

□ 1530

You're talking about four reactors right now in Georgia; two more coming online, that's six; Illinois has 11. There are over 104 across this whole country and, of course, we spent our time talking about the used nuclear fuel from the industry.

But when I started this debate about what do we do with high-level nuclear waste, I started with a DOE facility that goes back to World War II and the development of the nuclear bomb and the Fat Man bomb, which was built at Hanford, Washington. And all that waste, going all the way back to World War II, is in Hanford. And there are 53 million gallons of nuclear waste on site, buried right off the surface of the ground in tanks that are 750,000 to a million gallons each. Only about 40 of them—there is over 100. Only about 40 of them are double-lined. That means the rest are not. Some are leaking.

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SHIMKUS. I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. And the question of who is responsible in Hanford or Barnwell, South Carolina, or New Ellington to guard and protect, a tremendous burden on the States. But even if the Department of Homeland Security—maybe they do some oversight and protection of these sites. But 103 different sites across the country, how much simpler, how much safer, how much cheaper if they had one site to protect, that being 100 miles from Las Vegas at Yucca Mountain?

Mr. SHIMKUS. Continuing to speak on this issue of just looking at it, to kind of get away from just the nuclear generating profit sector, to address our responsibility as stewards of a program that was developed to stop World War II and then eventually remedy these environments that had an environmental impact.

Yucca Mountain, the waste storage plan for Hanford—and I've just toured it this year. The plan to gather up, deliquify, reprocess, put it in these canisters is designed to go to one location. Do you know what that location is? That location is Yucca Mountain.

So our failure to move forward, or our failure—actually, the other Chamber's failure, the leader of the Senate's failure, the President of the United States' failure, just tells Washington State what? Guess what. You've got this high-level nuclear waste that's leaking, that's close to the Columbia River, and just deal with it. Just deal with it.

I find that unacceptable after, as my colleague from Illinois said, $14.5 billion we've spent to prepare this site at Yucca Mountain only to have it stopped for political purposes.

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. Well, if the gentleman will yield to me again, and I appreciate the opportunity to discuss this, because what year did we commission a group to study—and there were a number of potential sites for permanent storage from all these 103 facilities—one unified central site?

I'm relatively sure—the gentleman could correct me if I am wrong, but it was at least a 5-year process before it was settled in 1987 and Congress at that time designated Yucca Mountain as the sole site for permanent high-level nuclear waste repository after years of contentious applications.

So this is set in law, is it not?

Mr. SHIMKUS. The Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 established Yucca Mountain as the national repository for high-level nuclear waste. And, again, for the educational purposes, Mr. Speaker, that is spent fuel. Sometimes it's spent nuclear waste from our Department of Defense, now controlled by the Department of Energy sites like Hanford.

Our argument is: Let's consolidate this waste safely, securely at one location so that, as my colleague from Georgia says, we can more safely, I think, effectively, I think, efficiently, I think, cost effectively manage, protect, and eventually try to remediate some of the damage that's been done over decades because of this high-level nuclear waste being located all over the country.

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. I have had the opportunity, as a Member of Congress, and particularly as a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, Mr. Speaker, to travel to France and Scandinavia recently to look at their nuclear facility but, in particular, their ability to reprocess in France and their ability to store in Scandinavia.

We have described a little bit about the physiognomy, if you will, of the Yucca Mountain area, the nuclear test site, that arid desert of northern Nevada; and they have, in Scandinavia, developed a laboratory. I think they call it The Clad. But it is literally 1,400 meters below ground in bedrock, and you could drive 18-wheel trucks down to something like 2 miles deep in the ground where their spent nuclear fuel is stored. And that's the model, and that's really what we are looking at and planning for at Yucca Mountain. Nothing, really, nothing could be safer in regard to storage.

The other thing is, while we were in France, we looked at a facility where they take that spent fuel, Mr. Speaker, and they reprocess it. So at some point in the future, we decide and we have the technology to do that, that source of spent nuclear fuel that's stored in Yucca Mountain could be used to recycle and to get more energy out of this spent nuclear fuel.

It's beyond me how a President, by Executive order, can stop the will of Congress. And maybe we ought to talk about that in regard to things like the Keystone energy pipeline and expand this discussion a little further.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Again, I thank my friend from Georgia for helping out on the Special Order and just addressing the issue of recycling. What do we do? Because those of us who follow the nuclear fuel cycle, most people want it closed. And how do you get it closed? You get it closed by getting as much energy out of the fuel rods as you can. You do that by reprocessing. But it would make sense that if there was someone who is going to attempt to do that, that the nuclear fuel would be close by.

There's probably some discussions about if we were going to have a reprocessing facility sometime in this country like France, where would you locate it? Where would it be situated? I mean, I am just a layman in this debate, but I think you would want it close by where the nuclear material is, the material that you want to use to reprocess, to create fuel.

I can't speak for the entire body. I do know that the House spoke on Yucca Mountain and bringing a finality to this—297 Members voted to ensure that we had the final dollars to do the final scientific study to move this process forward. And in that debate, it just showed that the will of the House was supportive and this is bipartisan. I mean, we don't have 297—or whatever the number is—Members who are just Republicans. We have 242. That means we brought a lot of our colleagues from the other side on this debate. Some of those really believe that the future is reprocessing and that we ought to be exploring that, and it's much better to have them located where you can recover that material.

□ 1540

If my colleague from Georgia wouldn't mind, we are joined by another colleague from Illinois. People wonder why we take up this cause. It's because we're a big nuclear State. It's about 50 percent of our electricity generation. I do a lot of coal. Coal is very important to me, but we are a nuclear power State which means we have a lot of sites, a lot of reactors, and we have a lot of nuclear waste.

So I yield to my colleague and thank him for coming down.

Mr. KINZINGER of Illinois. I thank my colleague from Illinois. I just want to say thank you for your leadership on this issue, among many other things. This is an issue that is very important. It is important not just for the country. It is important for my State, and

it's important for my district. The 11th District of Illinois is kind of north central Illinois. It's a beautiful place. Come spend money there sometime.

But we have three nuclear power plants there. In fact, at each nuclear power plant of course there is stored nuclear waste on site. And then we also have an area that was intended to be early on, the original site of what was going to be nuclear reprocessing in this country, and now it is really just a pool with stored nuclear waste in it.

So in one district—I think there's 131 locations across the country where we are storing this nuclear waste, and in my district alone we have four of those. So this is an issue that is very important not just to the people of Illinois, the people of the 11th District, but mainly to the people of this country.

I mean, Yucca Mountain, the fund was created for this sole purpose of finding a place, a safe place, a safe alternative to store nuclear waste.

Now, going back to the very beginning part of the debate as to why do we need nuclear power, I think we have addressed that. I think most Americans are on board with the understanding that it is good, clean power. It provides a lot of great jobs. I have toured some of the plants in my district, and I can tell you they are good, high-paying American jobs. They take us on that road to energy independence. So understanding then that we need nuclear power and understanding that nuclear power plays an important role, we have to talk about the unfortunate side of it, which is the storage.

Yucca Mountain has been, or was being, created until it was zeroed out for the purpose of storing all of this waste; and it just makes sense. You know, regardless of whether we build the nuclear reactors or reprocess them, we have to store this somewhere. Now here's the question, though. If Yucca Mountain is technologically unable to store this fuel, then I would think the NRC, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, needs to come out and tell us it's technologically insufficient and show us why.

But they're not doing that because the truth is technologically it's almost perfect, as far as something like this would go. But the chairman of the NRC has turned this into not necessarily what's the right thing to do for the industry, what's the right thing to do for the country, but what's the political thing to do, and turned the commission into a political commission.

When you talk about this and when you talk about the safety of our country, I think for something very basic like this, and I think it is very evident, I think we should take politics out of that. And I would think all of my colleagues joining me today would agree this doesn't need to be a political issue. We need to have the NRC free of the political manipulations; and only President Obama, frankly, can determine the fate of the chairman. I hope he takes that into account. I hope he takes into account what's the right thing to do for this country in the long run.

So we have great jobs here. We have a need for nuclear power. Let's just complete the puzzle, and let's put this stuff at Yucca Mountain.

Mr. SHIMKUS. If my colleague would continue to discuss this for a few minutes, you mentioned a fund in your kind of opening statement. For the benefit of the Speaker, could you explain where this fund comes from and who is paying into it and what is it designed to do and what's going on with it right now.

Mr. KINZINGER of Illinois. Look, if you pay for any kind of nuclear power, ratepayers pay for this fund.

Mr. SHIMKUS. So you have constituents who have been paying into this fund?

Mr. KINZINGER of Illinois. Sure. And paying for a long time. Let me add, for every year we delay opening—Yucca Mountain is not going away; it doesn't disappear off the face of the Earth—for every year we delay, it's costing us half a billion dollars more than what it's ultimately going to cost.

So my constituents, your constituents, anybody who uses any aspect of nuclear power, which is almost everybody, has been paying for this. This isn't some giant expenditure we're going to have to make out of the general fund when we don't have any money. This is already being funded. It's already being paid for. It only makes sense. I think the colleagues that are joining me here today will say the same thing: this just makes sense.

Mr. SHIMKUS. And part of this debate about the nuclear waste and where it's stored and the nuclear waste fund has been litigated in Federal court, and the courts have said it is the responsibility of the national government to take this waste as part of the law, complying with the law. Obviously, we have no place to take it. So we end up having the utility store the high-level nuclear waste on site; and some of them, some have not asked us yet, some of them we are actually paying to hold the waste that we're supposed to be holding.

Mr. KINZINGER of Illinois. If my colleague wouldn't mind, and you mentioned it just a few minutes ago, this idea passed this body with a large majority. That to me seems like this is the will of the American people. It's not just some agenda or some crazy pie-in-the-sky idea. This is the will of the American people, and it's the responsibility of us to ensure that we're being safe. I mean, it just seems very basic to me, and so I'm having a hard time figuring out how and why politics has come into play on this. I think this is a debate we solved decades ago. But nonetheless, out in Washington, D.C., nothing surprises me in the 10 months I've been out here.

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. If the subcommittee chair from Illinois would yield to me, if the gentleman from the 11th of Illinois lets the gentleman from the 11th of Georgia be somewhat instructive in regard to the politics, because that pure and simple is what it is. Of course comments were made in regard to the chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

But the fact is that it is the Secretary of Energy, it's the Secretary of Energy. This Secretary of Energy, a Nobel Laureate in nuclear physics who was essentially told by this administration to tell the Nuclear Regulatory Commission that he was requesting that the license application for Yucca Mountain be withdrawn from the NRC, taken out of their hands, the licensing process stopped with prejudice.

Now, I'm not a lawyer, but if there are any lawyers in the body, they understand when you withdraw something with prejudice, that means you can't bring it back up. So this $14 billion that has been taken out of the ratepayers from the 50 States, or at least where these 103 reactors exist, they are paying for this. And yet this political pressure on a gentleman who's got to be much, much smarter than any of us, a Nobel Laureate in nuclear physics; if I were him, as soon as that word came down to me and I got the memo from the White House, I would immediately resign over righteous indignation.

Mr. KINZINGER of Illinois. If I can just say quickly on that point, Aby Mohseni, acting director for licensing and inspections at the NRC, made this remark: ''Some senior managers contributed to the manipulation of the budget process and information to apparently make sure that the Yucca Mountain project would be left unfunded even if the license application was still before the NRC. We were unprepared for the political pressures and manipulations of our scientific and licensing processes that would come with the appointment of Chairman Jaczko in 2009.''

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. But, fortunately, if I might interject, the board of the NRC rejected that, rejected what he recommended.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Reclaiming my time, I would kind of close this circle, Mr. Speaker, reminding folks that the chairman of the NRC, Mr. Jaczko, used to work for now-majority leader in the Senate, HARRY REID. And it's the majority leader in the Senate that is blocking the funding for the final scientific analysis, and it is the chairman of the NRC who used to work for the majority leader who is complicit in this plan to shut down an investment of this country of $14.5 billion to comply with Federal law that we passed in 1982.

Now, in 1982 I was serving my country as an Army lieutenant in West Germany before the Wall came down. That's a long time ago. This has been the policy of this country for decades. And to have one man, one majority leader of the Senate, put a halt to that,

that's why we're down here, because he has raised this to a political debate, not a scientific debate.

□ 1550

And because it's a political debate, what I'm attempting to do over a series of weeks is go around the country and just identify where is high-level nuclear waste stored, and would it be better for that waste to be stored underneath a mountain in a desert, the most investigated piece of property on the history of this Earth. There is no piece of property that has been more studied than Yucca Mountain anywhere on the face of this Earth.

So I know this is hard for some folks to see. We're doing a tally as we go around the country to look at, where are the votes? And we have 27 people, bipartisan, who have said this is where it should go from Washington State; of course, Illinois and Wisconsin, Georgia, South Carolina, Arizona, Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, Maine, Vermont, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. We have new Senators who have not had an opportunity to publicly either make a statement on it or cast a vote. They're in the middle. We have 27 ''yes,'' 8 unknown. We're going to give them the benefit of the doubt. MERKLEY. FEINSTEIN was a ''no'' but Fukushima Daiichi and the two nuclear power plants that are on the Pacific Ocean in California and the high-level nuclear waste that's stored in ponds have her in a quandary based upon the representation of that State.

TESTER of Montana, unknown; LEE of Utah; BROWN of Massachusetts; AYOTTE of New Hampshire; SHAHEEN of New Hampshire; WICKER of Mississippi.

Bona fide ''noes'': REID of Nevada, HELLER of Nevada, CANTWELL of Washington, BOXER of California, BAUCUS of Montana, KERRY of Massachusetts, and SANDERS of Vermont.

So it's a chance to use the bully pulpit and my position as chairman of the subcommittee to help educate not only the floor, my colleagues, the Speaker, those who are following us, that there's got to be a better way to store high-level nuclear waste than in pools next to Lake Michigan, next to the Savannah River, next to the Pacific Ocean. Surely, there's a better place. And we know there is.

Thirty years of study and research—Federal law says Yucca Mountain in the desert underneath a mountain is probably as good a place as you're going to find, at least in the United States.

Mr. KINZINGER of Illinois. If the gentleman would grant me just a moment. When you said there's a mountain in the desert, or there's I think 131 locations as it exists today, I can tell you I have four of those locations in the 11th District in Illinois. I believe nuclear power is safe, effective, cheap, efficient. But right now there's four nuclear storage waste facilities in the district. That's by the Midewin Tallgrass Prairie. That's by populated areas and towns.

There are a lot of big issues going on in Washington, and this probably isn't at the top of people's priorities, but I would encourage anybody that's watching us right now who sees their senator's name on that board you had up earlier and says, Hey, my senator is a ''yea,'' call and say, Thank you. Encourage that senator if they're unsure. If they have the three yellow question marks, probably call that senator and say, Hey, I really would like to get you onboard with safe nuclear storage. And if they're a ''nay,'' please call them twice. Because we react to what we hear. And if the American people want safe storage—and I know they do—then this is the right alternative.

Mr. SHIMKUS. I appreciate, again, my colleague for coming down for this hour of discussion on really what should be the national policy on high-level nuclear waste in this country.

I didn't get a chance to go through all the areas but I'm going to end with Yucca Mountain versus the San Onofre Nuclear Generation Station between L.A. and San Diego. This is one of the ones I'm talking about. How much nuclear waste is in the desert underneath the mountain? None. How much is on the Pacific Ocean right on the coastline? There's the photo. That's 2,300 waste rods on site. The waste would be stored a thousand feet underground at Yucca. The waste is stored above the ground in pools right on the shoreline of the Pacific Ocean. The waste would be a thousand feet above the water table here. Of course, as you can see from the photo, the waste is right next to the Pacific Ocean. The waste at Yucca Mountain would be a hundred miles from the Colorado River. Again, you can see the waves breaking almost right up to the nuclear generating station between LA and San Diego.

I've gone to Massachusetts. I should have talked about Florida today. I've talked about Illinois. DOE locations like Washington State. There's a lot of nuclear waste defined differently all over this country. Let's do the correct public policy and get it at a single repository in the desert underneath a mountain.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your diligence, and I yield back the balance of my time.

CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. ELLISON. My name is KEITH ELLISON. I am the cochair of the Progressive Caucus and a Member of Congress from the great State of Minnesota. I'm here claiming time to speak on behalf of the Congressional Progressive Caucus.

The Congressional Progressive Caucus, Mr. Speaker, is 77 members in the United States Congress who believe that when we say the Pledge of Allegiance and we say liberty and justice for all, that means all—all means blacks, whites, Latinos, Asians, straight, gays, the senior citizens and the youngest among us, people with disabilities and people who are able-bodied. It means the great mass of American people included in ''in liberty and justice for all.''

The Progressive Caucus believes in economic justice. We believe in civil rights and human rights for all people. We believe that public employees are valuable to our society, and we honor and respect the services that they give to us. We believe that America, with our awesome military power, should use that power to promote peace in the world. We are the ones who called for the U.S. to not go into Iraq. When we went in there, we were the ones to push to get us out. We are the ones who are raising the issues around Afghanistan. And we'll continue to argue the case for diplomacy and for development and to make friends with the world, to be a good member of the international community in the United Nations and under international bodies.

We're not the ones who believe that the world is a scary, dangerous place and we've got to jack up the military as much as we can. We're not the ones who think that the rich don't have enough money and the poor have too much. We're not the people who believe in dividing Americans based on culture and color and gender and urban versus rural. We believe in unifying Americans and having equal rights for all people.

Yes, we are liberal, and we are proud of it. We're the Progressive Caucus.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I'm here to deliver the Progressive message. The Progressive message is what we're talking about today. The topic I'm going to address, Mr. Speaker, is going to be jobs in this American economy.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we want to speak as bipartisan as we can, but there's no question that the arguments that we have in Congress have a partisan tone. Therefore, for us to sit up here and say we're all just getting along here in Congress and we don't have a different point of view would be not exactly being straight with the American people.

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So we're going to say that the debates that we have been having in the House of Representatives have to do with those of us who believe that we as Americans need to live in harmony with the planet, need to try to cut down our carbon footprint, need to try to diminish pollution. And those others of us—mostly on the Republican side of the aisle—who make the case that, for the sake of industry, we have to sacrifice our health, our lungs, our good clean environment, they're making that case.